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Housekeepers' Chat

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Did you ever hear the story of the woman who walked two miles making a cherry pie? It's a true story. This woman had a great big old-fashioned farmhouse kitchen and a stove way across the room from her worktable and a sink way across the room from her stove. Then there was a pantry where she kept her supplies. And her utensils were tucked away in drawers here and there in that kitchen. So in walking back and forth to get supplies and utensils and then walking back and forth from the table to the stove, altogether she walked two miles just making that one pie. How did she know how far she walked? Well, one day just for curiosity's sake she wore a pedometer and then went about her job exactly as she always did. The result was that when the pie was made the pedometer measured two miles. I've been told how many miles she walked in one day getting her family's three meals but I've forgotten exactly. I think, though, that it was about fifteen. A sad story, I call that. All the result of having an inconvenient, poorly arranged and badly organized kitchen. I might add also that this woman had never heard about the bulletin on convenient kitchens I've mentioned so often.

Today I have another story to tell you almost as dreary as that one. Only it has a happy ending. This story is about the distance several women in New York State walked making one simple apron. Perhaps you have been under the impression that sewing was one household job at which the housekeeper could sit down. I always thought that, too, until I heard this story. The person who told me was the state household management specialist, a very truthful person, by the way, who never exaggerates in the least. She made a study of this problem of sewing in the home. Several homemakers she knew who had been sewing for years each made a simple apron and measured the distance they had to walk while they did it. The specialist kept records of exactly where and how far they went in the process. You would be surprised to see the results. Mrs. D. for example, walked 534 feet and had to go in five rooms just to make that one simple garment. Mrs. C. walked 524 feet and entered seven rooms. The other women all walked good distances

This happened simply because the equipment was not conveniently organized and arranged. When you have to cut out the garment on the dining room table, take it into the front room to stitch it on the machine, walk back to the kitchen or the laundry to press it on the ironing board, and so forth, the steps and the minutes mount up and the job is slow and irritating. Whenever any of my friends tell me that they hate to sew I always wonder if the trouble may not lie in scattered and unorganized sewing equipment. Any job is irritating and disagreeable if the worker is handicapped by having to go from room to room to do his job when his equipment should be centered in one place. Too few tools or poor tools

unsuited to their purpose are other causes of annoyance. Sewing is exactly like any other task. To be done pleasantly and efficiently all the necessary equipment should be centered in one spot. Every housekeeper who sews for her family should have either a sewing room or a sewing corner fitted up for comfort and convenience. A business-like center where she can do a good job easily.

In many homes the sewing is done after the hard work of the day is finished and the homemaker is tired. You can see how tiresome it is at such a time to have to go all over the house to assemble and put away the equipment in addition to the sewing work itself. No wonder many women feel that sewing is a disagreeable job.

And one other thing. Unorganized equipment is usually the result of lack of planning and that often leads to doing the wrong thing first and then having to rip the work out and do it over. Naturally this increases the distaste for sewing. Now if the confusion and annoyance, as well as the time and energy spent in assembling, using and putting away equipment, could be cut down, and if the mechanical parts of the job could be well ordered and automatic, then I am sure many women would find sewing a pleasant occupation. Since so often home sewing must be done for the sake of economy and making satisfactory clothes, why not make it an enjoyable job?

How? I'll answer that question by telling you about the plan that the household management specialist worked out to centralize sewing equipment and make sewing an easier and pleasanter job for the home dressmaker. Her idea was to have a cabinet for the sewing room that would hold all the necessary equipment, everything from needles and thread to the iron and ironing board. We've all heard about kitchen cabinets for years. I'm sure I don't know why none of us thought of a cabinet for the sewing room.

Let me describe the cabinet which the specialist had built. It is about $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, 4 feet wide and 18 inches deep and contains a folding ironing board and collapsible cutting table besides space for all other sewing equipment. By using the cabinet all necessary operations can be carried on in a small space. When the work is finished all the equipment can be put away inside and concealed behind the doors. The cabinet has a partition down the center. In the left-hand side are adjustable shelves with two drawers at the bottom to hold material. The ironing board is hinged to the second shelf from the bottom and can be folded up in the cabinet when not in use. The shelves give space for the iron, pressing cloths, pressing pads, fashion magazines, clothing books and bulletins and a portable sewing equipment case. On top of the drawers is room for a portable sewing machine. On the right hand side, one top shelf holds millinery supplies. A rod beneath this holds dress hangers for any unfinished garments. Then there is space beneath for a dress form and a skirt gauge. Even the doors have been put to use. There is a full length mirror fastened on one door and a folding table on the other. Then there are cloth pockets for pins, shears, thimbles, brushes, etc., and small wooden racks just the right size for spools of thread.

Of course, many of us who sew only occasionally would not want to have such an elaborate cabinet. But the idea can be satisfactorily used on a simpler scale. Work out a sewing corner of your own where you can have good light on your sewing

machine, cutting table and ironing board, and where you can have a comfortable chair to sit in. Then center your equipment. Have it in easy convenient reach. Even if there is one ironing board in the kitchen or laundry, it will save you many steps if you have another in your sewing corner. And be sure it is a folding one. It is so clumsy and such a bother to have to go to the effort of putting your board across two chairs each time you want to press.

Tomorrow we'll have a chat on children's clothes for spring. Then there will be a menu for either the noon or evening meal, planned for the children and the whole family and suitable for one of the special days observed by many families during this Lenten season.
